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R. W. MACKENNA

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VERSES



Mackenna, Robert William

VERSES BY ROBERT
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To the
STUDENTS OF MY TIME
AT
EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY
1892-1897

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

SHELLEY.

PREFACE

Most of the following verses have appeared at intervals during the last few years in the pages of The Student, and are now collected at the request of a large number of the readers of that magazine.

Written, for the greater part, in the odd moments of a busy course, and as a relaxation from more arduous occupations, they were never intended for dissemination outside student circles, and make no pretensions to literary merit. The melancholy note which pervades some of them is explained by the fact that they were composed under the shadow of impending examinations. None of them are, in any sense, autobiographical.

The first part of the book contains verses on themes of general interest ; the second is devoted to productions peculiarly medical, the allusions in which can be appreciated only by those who have had a professional training. It has been thought better not to append a glossary of medical terms, as those for whom the verses are intended will understand the references without it ; while with such an aid the uninitiated could understand only in part.

R. W. MACKENNA.

EDINBURGH,

October 1897.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SPENSER IN IRELAND	11
THE ISLE OF CALYPSO	17
THE SECRET OF THE SEA	20
THE ENIGMA OF LIFE	22
DEAD!	23
MAGDALENE	24
THE ROSE AND THE LEAF	26
THE THRUSH	27
ACROSS THE YEARS	28
FRIENDS	29
FAILURES	30
ON THE MOOR	31
THE RIVER	33
FACES IN THE STREET	34
AT EVENTIDE	35
YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW	36
WITH A ROSE	38
"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"	39
ON THE WINGS OF THE DYING YEAR	40

CARMINA CADAVERIS

	PAGE
PROLOGUE	44
"VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE"	45
"FOR VALOUR"	46
AN EPITAPH	49
ARS LONGA: VITA BREVIS	50
MAN	51
IN THE BLUES	52
MONUMENTUM AERE PERENNIS	56
THE LAND OF "LAUGHING-GAS"	58
CETACEAN WILLIAM	60
THE SONG OF "THE SECOND"	61

VERSES

Spenser in Ireland

(ENGLISH CLASS PRIZE POEM, EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY, 1895)

THE share of Life cuts deeply through the path
Which mortals fashion for themselves to tread ;
Man dreams of harvest, but the aftermath
Is all he garners for his children's bread.
Time changes everything ; to-morrow's dead
Are those who lived and loved but yesterday ;
And they, whose trembling feet are sometimes led
Up Fortune's golden ladder, with dismay
Feel the bright rungs too oft beneath them sink
away.

* * * * *

Colin the gentle, in the ashen shade,
Trilled on his oaten pipe a simple song
Of life and love, such as the Mantuan made
The fragrant groves of Italy among,
And at the Muse's shrine his censer swung
Odorous of incense, sweetly redolent
Of wayside flowers, that all about them flung
In rich profusion shafts of sweetest scent,
That to the vagrant air a subtle fragrance lent.

But Fortune called him from his gracious task,
And led him o'er the crisped ocean ways
To a fair land that, like a bird, doth bask
Amid the weltering waters, where the maze
Of discord winds forever, and the days
Ebb to the babble of incessant strife ;
Thither she led him, and amid the frays
Of nations plunged him, into dangers rife,
Where War's wild fury cast a bloodstain on his life.

And then the quiet secker after Truth—
The courtier shining in his sovereign's eyes—
Saw grisly Mars shoot out his bloody tooth,
And heard the wail of children upward rise
Trembling to God ; or shuddered at the cries
That burst from broken hearts, and desolate
Homes where the body of a father lies
Drenched in his blood, and at the woeful fate
Of wives and children shed a tear compassionate.

The blaze of War was quenched, the purple cloud
Blown into tatters by the wanton wind,
Murder was stifled in his swarthy shroud,
And the fierce clang of battle left behind ;
Then Cynthia, to her suitors ever kind,
Gifted her poet with a castle fair,
O'er whose grey walls the pensive ivy twined
In sombre loveliness, while here and there
A trailing branch of flowers shed fragrance through
the air.

There, in the evening stillness, when the moon—
A silver sickle in an ebon sky—
Flashed o'er the drifting clouds, and, from her
swoon

Of darkness, Night awoke in brilliancy,
The poet, gazing with his dreamy eye
Through the wide mullioned casement, saw the
plain
Peopled with knights, or, in his fantasy,
Watched Gloriana and her faëry train
Holding their court within the forest's leafy fane.

Or through his drooping eyelids, half awake,
Saw a gay sloop shoot outwards from the shore,
And of itself glide through the placid lake,
Sweeping the water-lilies from before
Like a white-bosomed, stately swan, while o'er
Its rounded prow the laughing waters flung
An arch of foam, and, as the maids of yore
Sewed on their tapestry tales of love and wrong,
He wove his dreams into a web of living song.

And then the "Shepherd of the Ocean" * came
Wet from his flock, and by the reedy marge
Of wimpling Mulla saw the poet frame
And fashion melodies, or heard the large
Full-throated measures from his lips discharge
Their freight of gold ; or underneath a sky
Dappled with cloudlets, in their painted barge
Out on the mere, with thoughts in harmony,
They twain would muse upon Life's mutability.

All things are mutable ! Above the hills
That girdled the horizon rose the hand
Of red Rebellion, and the mountain rills
Blushed with the blood of many a slaughtered
band ;

And Rage and Rapine reeled across the land
In a wild fury, and the poet's bower,
Plundered and kindled, by the breezes fanned,
Crumbled to ashes, and a tender flower
Whose bud had scarcely ope'd was blighted in
that hour.

* Sir Walter Raleigh.

Outcast, forsaken, o'er the sea he fled ;
Oh that *thus* Colin should come home again !
Shattered his dreams of Fortune, for his bread
Almost dependent on his fellow-men,
He drooped, as droops a blasted tree, and then
Passed into silence. Life had been a game
Played in the dark with Destiny ; yet, when
His days were perfected, he left to fame
A wealth of precious song and an undying name.

The Isle of Calypso

FROM THE GREEK

STRAIGHTWAY did Hermes bind beneath his feet
His golden-gleaming sandals, heaven-wrought,
Which bear him o'er the sea and o'er the land
That knows no limit, swiftly as the wind.

His wand he took, wherewith he lulls the eyes
Of whom he will, or backward draws again
The veil of sleep, and, clasping in his hand
This sceptre, forth he fled along, and from
The cloud-capped peak Pierian his flight
He bent precipitant towards the deep.

Then, as the seamew skimming o'er the wave
Seeketh her food among the awful bays
Of the unfruitful ocean, dipping oft
Her spacious pinions in the billow's crest,
Did Hermes speed across the swelling tide.
But when he reached the isle that beacons far
Across the main, from out the azure sea
He rose, and sped across the land until

The vaulted cave, wherein the lovely nymph
Of braided tresses dwelleth, loomed in view.
The nymph he found within ; upon the hearth
A fire blazed brightly, while afar the isle
Was redolent of cedars smoothly cleft
And of the burning cypress. And the nymph
Warbled melodious as she plied the loom
And shot her golden shuttle through the web.

Around the spacious grot was blossoming
A grove luxuriant, where poplar black,
Alder and fragrant cypress did attune
Their trembling leaves. There many a long-winged
bird,
Falcons and owls and shrieking cormorants
That haunt the ocean, built their lofty nests.
And all about the hollow cave there trailed
A mantling vine with luscious fruit bedecked :
While from one fount four lucid runnels welled,
And wimpled each its devious bed along :
And downy meads of violet and thyme,
Kissed by the waters, shed their fragrance there.

.

So fair the sight a never-dying god
That thither came might joy within his heart.

There stood the messenger, the Argicide,
And gazed with wonder over all the scene ;
Then, when his raptured soul had drunk its fill
Of Nature's loveliness, his way he went
Into the spacious cave. The graceful nymph
Failed not to know him, for the deathless gods
Well know their fellows even though apart
They have their dwellings ; then the goddess spread
Before the herald food ambrosial,
And mixed the ruby nectar, while he ate,
And with her banquet well was satisfied.

The Secret of the Sea

THE back of the sea is scarred by the lash
Of the angry wind ;
And the tumbling billows plunge and splash
At the foot of the iron crags, or dash
Up the shingly banks in a foaming sheet,
With a low harsh hiss, as the breakers meet
And the pebbles grind.

A maiden stands on the crest of the shore,
In the dark, alone ;
And her wind-tossed tresses round her pour
In a wayward stream ; while the seagulls soar
Above her, and wheel, and dip, and rise,
And startle the night with their eerie cries
And their frightened moan.

She looks through the mist of her tear-damp eyes
O'er the boiling sea,
And a prayer steals up from her heart, and flies
On trembling wings to the wind-vexed skies,—
“ Father ! my loved one safely keep,
Bring him back o'er the face of the pathless deep,
Bring him back to me ! ”

The wind shrieks over the sandy dunes

 In its wild career ;

But the wail of the sea into silence swoons,

While a wave in a hollow gullet croons,—

“ He is dead ! In the darkness of ocean’s breast

Thy lover is rocked to unending rest ” :—

 But she cannot hear.

The Enigma of Life

DAY bursts in glory o'er the purple hills,
And all the earth in dewy robes is drest ;
Grey night glides down, and all the land is laid
Asleep within the slumbrous lap of rest.

So o'er the margin of the years our lives
Leap into being, slowly climb the hill,
With trembling footsteps stumble down the slope,
Then pass into the shade, and all is still.

And the loved hand, that warmly clasped our own
In sweetest friendship, cold and nerveless lies ;
Hushed is the voice that whispered tenderly,
And quenched the light of love that filled the
eyes.

And dust returns to dust, and dear ones dead
Are laid for ever 'neath the flower-strewn sod ;
Yet why stand idly weeping, if our lives
Are passing moments in the Life of God ?

Dead !

DEAD! In the bleakness of a withered love
Her soul has starved. A year ago there was
No happier smile than hers, no sweeter face,
But now the dew of death is on her brow,
And Daisy sleeps.

She gave her heart to him,
And with her maiden faithfulness she loved
And trusted him. But *he* played with her heart,
And, when his sport was done, tossed it away,
And in the silence of her breast it broke.

She drooped and faded, and when Autumn flung
His russet mantle o'er the leafy woods,
And the red foliage fluttered from the trees,
She died. Heap flowers upon her grave, for she
Is dead! Nought but a memory! a mere
Dream-face that cometh from the bygone days!
A sweet sad dream! My Daisy, come again!
O God! *I* loved her too, and she is dead.

Magdalene

ONLY a woman lost to shame,
Cold and unlovely she lies dead ;
One of the fallen over whom
No tears of holy grief are shed ;
Yet once, perhaps, *her* childish voice
Thrilled some fond mother's heart with glee,
As with her infant hands she filled
Her lap with flowers less pure than she.

A few short years ! a winsome maid !
A villain with his arts of hell
Weaving his lies, and she, poor child,
Loving too much, had faith, and fell :
Fell, as the petals of a flower
Drop in the dust ; and then, disgrace,
Anger, reproaches : till she fled
From her relentless father's face.

Fled from her home ! and never knew
How sad remorse wept o'er her name :
O God, that man unsullied goes,
While weaker woman bears the shame !

Heartsore and weary, friendless, starved
 (Hunger is virtue's winding-sheet),
She sank, until in tears she trod
 Her Passion Path * along the street.

Women less tempted swept along,
 And on her heartless glances cast,
Or drew their righteous robes aside,
 Lest she should touch them as she passed.
How often, when her memory turned
 Its pages, did she steal away
Into the darkness, where her heart
 Bled in its own Gethsemane ?

God only knows ! But when the thread
 Of each man's life is gathered up,
And the last Magdalene has drained
 Down to the dregs her bitter cup,
Perhaps, while she stands fearlessly
 Brave before Him who made her just,
God in His righteous wrath shall crush
 Man, her betrayer, into dust.

* Via Dolorosa.

The Rose and the Leaf

A ROSEBUD nestled on a leaf,
And hid its blushes in the shade,
While to the sun-kissed flower the leaf
Sweet whispers of devotion made ;
But, in the dusk of morning time,
Came heedlessly a passer-by
And plucked the dew-impearled rose,
And left the lonely leaf to die.

I loved her : she was fair to see,
Tender and true and nobly good,
She turned my days to gladness by
The sweetness of her womanhood.

* * * * *

Death sought the garden of my heart,
And found my rosebud hidden there ;
He took her to himself, and I
Am left alone in my despair.

The Thrush

OUT on the leafy hawthorn in the brake
The speckled throistle pipes his sober lay.

No honeyed flood, such as the nightingale
Pours from his throbbing throat in the hushed night
When the pale moon floats o'er the drifted banks
Of fleecy cloud, rolls from his swelling breast.
His is an humbler lay, yet sweeter far
Than that weird siren-song that rent the soul
Of him who dared, as olden minstrels tell,
The swinge of surges on the Scyllan shoal.
He warbles to his mate of Spring, who steals,
Wet from the wintry woods in mantle green,
Over the dewy meads, and how the flowers
Dapple the fields where'er her lily feet
Have pressed their mould. No melancholy note
Frets his mellifluous voicings, all his joy
Flows in his song. Quaver, and trill and shake,
Blent into dulcet harmony, float out
Upon the listening air ; but darkness falls
O'er the green woodland and the distant glade ;
And the sweet singer ends his melody.

Across the Years

WHAT music trembles through the night
Beneath the cold eternal sky,
As if some spirit cheered its flight
With notes of dulcet melody?

* * * *

The pent-up music of a soul,
That died with half its song unsung,
Across the silent years doth roll
In liquid beauty from its tongue.

And love-lit eyes peer through the gloom
That fills the valley of the Past,
And, like a blush, the rosy bloom
Of youth on withered cheeks is cast ;

And hand clasps hand within the veil
Of hallowed thoughts made sweet by tears,
And hearts throb sadly at the tale
The song sings of forgotten years.

Friends

———A friend is a priceless jewel,
Better than all that an Empress wears ;
Gold is but dust in the eyes of those
Who know that the love of a friend is theirs.

Failures

With ready hands, our wreaths of bay
We shower upon the heads of those,
Who proudly up the golden way
Of Fame, with echoing feet, have trod ;
While ill-starred brothers lying near
Amid the dust we pass in haste,
Too blind to know that failure here
May be success with God.

On the Moor

THE grey mist lifts from off the purple heather,
Wet with a myriad diamond drops of dew,
Over God's giant hills the sun is leaping,
Impetuous to climb the arch of blue,
While here and there a trembling coil of smoke
Marks the white shielings of the moorland folk.

High overhead a dauntless lark is tossing
From his sweet throat a wild, wild madrigal,
Whose cunning notes cleave, like a shaft, the silence,
And make the voiceless moor-wind musical :
Why should such melody awake regret,
O heart of mine ? Why can I not forget ?

Twenty long years ago, on such a morning,
Bright with the promise of the coming day,
We parted here ; she, smothering her anger,
Bent her dear head, and softly stole away :
Passed out of sight : sweet flower of womanhood,
Misunderstanding, and misunderstood.

Cold in my pride, I sought the restless city,
Where, in the clamour of the crowded street,
Sick of remembrance, weary of forgetting
Her whom in fantasy I loved to meet,
Idly I dreamed ; she never came again,
And hungry hope sank slowly into pain.

Under the stalwart palm-trees she is sleeping
In the quiet bosom of the tranquil West :
No heather waves, no lark above is piping
The sinless melody she loved the best :
But the sad waves, stopped in their eager race,
Lap murmurous about her resting-place.

Around the moments of our deepest anguish
In after-days the sweetest memories cling :
We fret ourselves, but cannot read the mystery—
Life without Sorrow were a joyless thing :
God grant that, when we fall amid the strife,
Heaven may be sweeter for the pain of Life.

The River

ALL is still. The stars are dimples
On the cheek of Night ;
Down the glade the river wimples
As it fades from sight ;
And its music, faint and dying,
Ripples far away,
While the night wind, soft-replying,
Wakens memory.

Faces in the Street

AIMLESS I wander through the city streets,
An unknown unit in the throng and press,
Where each man is a little island girt
By his own narrow sea of selfishness.

Held in the tangle of the crowd I watch
The changing faces, as they come and go
Like wayward spindrift that the wilful wind,
Wildly incessant, chases to and fro.

Haggard with hate or bitter with despair
Onward they sweep, a long unbroken train ;
Lips ripe for laughter, faces glad with youth,
Eyes lit with love, or cold with proud disdain.

Sometimes a face sweet with a glad content,
And holy with a faith that wavers not,
Steals on my gaze out of the tedious crowd
With the crisp freshness of a flower unsought.

Dreaming, I turn to watch it, and, as though
The chains that bind me down to earth were riven,
My heart leaps from the dust of common things,
And rises for a moment nearer heaven.

At Eventide

PALE Evening, brooding o'er the earth
In robes of dewy fragrance drest,
Weeps o'er the flowery meads and drops
A tear upon the lily's breast.

Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow

WE look into our hearts, and turning over
 The fragrant rose-leaves of old memories,
 Sigh for the dreams whose ghostly incompleteness
 Haunts, shadow-like, our yesterdays ;
 And childishly we think that, if before us
 The vanished years lay heaped like burnished gold,
 Each moment we should fill with brave endeavour,
 Not with elusive visions as of old.

With hands of faith we grasp the vacant future,
 To-day we plan, to-morrow we shall build :
 The ashes of the morrow fall around us
 With our ambitions unfulfilled ;
 And giant hopes, whose summits challenge heaven,
 We chase through leagues of unproductive years,
 But never grasp them, while within our footprints
 The poppy-flower of Indolence appears.

What are our wild-tongued boasts of godlike wisdom,
 If we are blind and cannot understand
 How, in the narrow present, past and future
 Shoulder to shoulder stand ?

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW 37

Yesterday is twin-brother with To-morrow,
The past is built out of our dead To-days,
The future is the present framed in distance
And beautiful with vast uncertainties.

To-day is with us. Let us cease repining
For lost occasions and for things undone ;
And let the future hoard its gracious secrets
Until the morrow is begun ;
So let us mould into the little moments
Great deeds, whose nobleness shall perfect praise,
And, striving ever, make the too-brief present
The brightest jewel in our crown of days.

With a Rose

DEAREST ! I prithee take this flower
And wear it near thy heart,
That it may know the happiness
Of being where thou art ;
The dewdrops to its petals cling,
And in the starlight shine,
Yet is its witching loveliness
Not half so sweet as thine.

“A Little Child shall lead Them”

THE world may call it maudlin sentiment,

But, when I look into a child's great eyes,

I see, as in the mirror of the years,

The gentle Nazarene in beauty rise,

And say,—I learned it at my mother's knee—

“Suffer the little ones to come to Me.”

On the Wings of the Dying Year

A STILLNESS broods on the earth like the heavy
shadow of death,
And only a single star looks down from the sable
sky,
And on weary wings the year, like a wounded bird,
sweeps past
To sink in the fathomless mists of time, to swoon
in the dark and die.

For the lily is dead in the field, and the blush of the
rose has paled,
And hushed are the wild love-notes that the
throstle piped in the spring :
For the autumn leaves have dropped on the bier of
the bygone days,
And the snow floats down like a plume that falls
from an angel's spotless wing.

What of the rosy dreams, and the golden hopes that
shone,
As we stood, in the dusk of the dawn, on the brink
of the fathomless year ?

ON THE WINGS OF THE DYING YEAR 41

The dreams, like a morning cloud, have passed into
nothingness,

And instead of the joy of a hope fulfilled, we have
only the scald of a tear.

Thus hath it ever been ; for the path of the sons of
men

Is laid in a darkened vale, where the briars of
sorrow abound :

For silver is wooed from the rock by the biting
breath of the fire,

And only by tribulation and pain can the heart of
a man be found.

But out of the dust shall rise, like the Phœnix,
another year,

And the torch of the Dawn shall light the hills
of the East once more,

And the blossom shall cling to the boughs, and the
air shall be full of song,

And the murmurous waves of the sea shall beat
their ceaseless tune on the shore.

42 ON THE WINGS OF THE DYING YEAR

For the tale repeats itself, and the soul of man is the
same,

Though the countless æons come, and the myriad
cycles go ;

But the year that dawns may bring, as a gem in her
hidden store,

Eden the long-lost back to the earth ; we may
hope, but we cannot know.

Carmina Cadaveris :

VERSES FROM THE DISSECTING-ROOM

AND

ELSEWHERE.

De mortuis nil nisi—BONES.

Prologue

My Muse,
That erst on buoyant wings
O'er leagues of flowery land hath flown,
Aside her ornate mantle flings
Over the grave of former things,
And, ghoul-like, pecks a bone.

“Virginibus Puerisque”

TOUCH not! These songs were never meant

For eyes so innocent as thine,

They reek of the dissecting-room,

Of blood and bones, of weeds and wine ;

A streamlet of unholy gore

Runs crimson over every page,

Bones talk, and half-dissected “stifls”

Shake their thin limbs in futile rage ;

No, no! Such gruesome words and deeds

Are only meet for sterner man,

They’re far too coarse for one who loves

The watered milk of *Annie Swan*.

“For Valour”

(AFTER KIPLING—A LONG WAY)

PERHAPS you think I ain't o' much account,—
A bloomin' corp in a dissectin'-room,—
But when you've heard the story I'm agoin' to
recount,
You'll be sayin' I'm deservin' of a tomb
With the honourable dead,
Who for hearth and home have bled,
While here I am a-lyin' in this butcher's shop instead.

I've seen a bit o' service in my time,
And I owns a stock o' very decent scars,
For I've followed Britain's standard into many a
furrin' clime,
And I've fought through a half-a-dozen wars;
But here I am to-day,
In this unexpected way,
A-learnin' raw recruits to know a man's Anatomy.

I was in the Rooshian War o' '54,
And I've laid among the trenches night and day,

With the shells a-bustin' round us, while, above the
cannon's roar,

You could hear the shrapnel hurtle on its way,

And the pewter bullets sing,

As they passed us on the wing,

A song that kind of made you feel they'd know the
way to sting.

You'll have heard about the gallant Light Brigade,—

How it rode into the bloomin' jaws of hell,—

I was in it, but a Rooshian who was skilly at his trade

Jabbed a bay'net in my belly and I fell,

But I pulled him to the ground,

And I felt in dooty bound

To make cat's-meat of the innards of the sanguinary
hound.

But the place where I got pulped the worst

Was in Injy, when the Mutiny was on ;

We was marchin' up to Delhi, where the rebels
rallied first,

And nearly half the journey we had gone,

When we innercently strayed

Into an ambushade,

That the dirty heathen scuts had gone and
treacherously laid.

With a screechin', fit to wake the shrouded dead,
Down upon us from the hills the heathen raced,
Each with fifteen feet o' turban round his coffee-
coloured head
And an inch or two of *kharki* round his waist.
Half-a-dozen made for me,
And I jolly well could see
That my chances were as rummy as they possibly
could be.

I don't remember much about the fight,
But, when my battered senses came again,
Half-a-dozen ribs was broken, and I'd lost the
power of sight,
And my left leg was a-hangin' by the skin;
But, what 's a pint of blood
When it's for your country's good?
And the surgeon patched me up again as neatly
as he could.

I never got a medal nor a clasp,
And perhaps the world never heard my name,
But the three essentials of a British soldier I
could grasp,—
Do your dooty, kill your man, and take the
blame;

And though I ain't V.C.,
I think you will agree
That I should have had a better fate nor *this*
awaitin' me.

An Epitaph

THERE'S a maxim in Latin you'll frequently see
Engraven on storied tomb-stones,
But anatomists hold it should properly be
De mortuis nil nisi—Bones.

Ars longa : Vita brevis

Working man Called Dan.	Doctor says, "Bad case."
Saturday, Gets his pay.	Empty bed, Daniel dead.
Public-house, Big carouse.	Drama ends, No friends.
Chucked out, Knocks about.	Winter gloom, Dissecting-room.
Falls asleep, Snow deep.	Fragrant whiff, Fresh <i>stiff</i> .
Pleurisy, <i>R.I.E.</i>	Students view Subject new.

Man

“In the world there is nothing great but man ; in man there is nothing great but mind.”

(In the World)

MAN, in his moment of arrogant pride,
Forgetting his lowly estate,
Vaunteth himself as a god, and boasts
That he alone is great.

(In the Dissecting-room)

But man is less than the meanest flower
That quivers with life in the light,
When the lock-gate lifts and the spirit ebbs
Into the Infinite.

In the Blues

WITH shallow sobs the fire has flickered out,
Midnight has boomed dull from the distant Tron,
Ghostly the wind moans round the chimney-tops,
And all my hopes of getting through are gone ;—
Cold feet drive many men to suicide,
And, musing thus, I lay my books aside.

“To be or not to be ?” Life is a medley
Played on a lute with many broken strings,
Half sweet, half sorrowful, whose notes return
Back to the chaos whence their being springs,
And I am weary as a little child
On whose long play the summer sun has smiled.

So, shall I end it all ? Oh ! it were sweet
To silence all the discord and forget
Life's blows, life's tempests, and the torturing hate
Of men, their sorrows and their ceaseless fret :
—The hunger of a hope unsatisfied :—
Bitter the *Second*,—welcome suicide !

Strychnine ? Well, No ! It's hardly good enough.
Of course it does its duty, but, you see,

It knots the muscles in tetanic spasms,
And death is heralded by agony:
Besides, it makes one's face convulsive, while
I should prefer, when dead, to wear a smile.

And then there's Prussic Acid. Well, it's quick
And very merciful: only a cry,
A short shrill heart-shriek like a wounded deer's,
And then you reel and fall and gasp and die.
No, thank you! It's too common:—what you get
The villain using in a Novelette.

No more of drugs! I'll try another plan:
I've got a Colt's revolver hidden in
My writing-desk, with it I'd do the deed
Were I not anxious to avoid a din;
I would! I'd bang a bullet through my heart,
Were it less noisy and less void of Art.

I've got it! Let me cut a *radial*,
And, as my bounding life-stream flows away,
I'll trace a pulse-wave for friend Rutherford,
And, dying, write a brief epitome
Of all my symptoms; thus I'll leave a name
Honoured by Science, though obscured by Shame.

Ay, ay! To-morrow, when the punctual gun
Roars its loud message from the Castle Rock,
From 'Varsity and Hospital I know
Students will pour, and listen with a shock,
As newsboys rush on them from every side
With "*Spatch* and *News*,—A Student's Suicide."

The papers go like wildfire. I can see,
In fancy, half-a-dozen round one page:—
"Who is it?"—"Smith?"—"The *Dickens*!"—
"When?" and "How?"
"Poor beggar!"—"Was he *stony*?"—"What's
his age?"
"I knew him well!"—"He was a chum of mine!"—
"I was his dresser when he worked in *Nine*."

And so they'll talk, scattered in little groups,
(For tapping strictured feelings gives relief);
And then they'll go about their work again,
For students haven't time for idle grief,
And when a fellow shuffles off the scene
Things just go on as though he had not been.

Of course, there's bound to be a "Sectio,"
And Littlejohn will crack his usual jest;

And then *The Student*'s sure to have a "par,"

About my "sad removal,"—and the rest ;

And you can bet your boots, the S.R.C.

Will send my folks a vote of sympathy.

Whew ! I'd forgotten ! What about my girl ?—

Leal-hearted lassie with the violet eyes,—

I know she'll cut up awful ; why, she weeps

Even when a thirty-second cousin dies.

Dear little thing !—Some sorrows are but brief,

She'd perish in the desert of her grief.

I shouldn't like that either. It were cruel

To rob the earth of such a flower as she ;

Besides, on second thoughts, I hardly know

How the old world could prosper wanting *me*,

So meantime, so to speak, I'll go on bail,

And maybe, after all, I shall not fail.

Monumentum ære Perennius

I ONCE was a tramp, and I wandered about
 Through the country with rollicking glee :
 I boozed and I begged, I never did more,
 (For half-an-hour's work made my hands very sore,
 And ours is the land of the free),
 But I never once thought that *I* and *Myself*
 Were any one other than *Me*.

But now that, a subject, I'm riven and carved
 By embryo medical men,
 I find that in life I was only a sham,
 For a poor bit of patchwork is all that I am,
 An extract of others, for when
 My skin is peeled off me I see I'm a fraud—
 The jackdaw in feathers again.

When alive I was frequently called to the bar
 As Thomas Brown, *alias* Jones,
 Etcet'ra, *ad lib.* ; but I never once thought
 How plural I was, till up here I was brought
 Where I learn that even my bones
 And my nerves and my vessels are named after men,
 Who have quarried from me their tombstones.

There's *Scarpa's* Triangle, there's *Hunter's* Canal,
 Both of which you will find in my thigh ;
 With *Arnold's* Foramen—the size of a pin—
 The Membrane of *Reissner*, the Zonule of *Zinn*,
 Which is somewhere, I think, in my eye ;
 And the Valve of *Vieussens* and *Jacobson's* Nerve,
 And the Lobulus *Spigellii*.

A bee in one's bonnet is quite bad enough,
 So at least it is frequently said ;
 But what do you think of a fellow who wears
 The sheath of a *Huxley* round each of his hairs,
 While the fissures of *Sylvius* spread
 Through his brain, and *Rolando* and Mr. *Mouro*
 Have permanent homes in his head.

From what I have said, though I might have said
 more,

I think you will easily see
 That I'm hardly myself, for, to come to an end,
 I am only a polyglot kind of compend.
 Of Anatomist's Biographie,
 For with *Poupart* and *Alcock* and *Galen* and *Nuck*
 There is hardly a corner for *Me*.

The Land of "Laughing-Gas"

I BREATHED a whiff of laughing-gas and soared
Through a dense bank of clouds, and found myself
In a fair land. The drowsy zephyrs clung
To the thick drifts of pearly blossom, which
Breathed incense from the branches; here and
there,

A bird poured forth a honeyed jet of song.
The weary bees, clad in their dusty coats
Of spangled mail, sick of the scented breath
Of balmy flowers, dozed in the chalices
Of honeysuckles, poppies, hyacinths.
The rivers lay asleep beneath the sun;
The sloop-like leaves of water-lilies hid
Their cup-shaped flowers, that floated lazily
A-dream upon the bosom of the waves.
Down to the runnel's margent ran a mead
Of fragrant thyme and purple pimpernel,
Where in the coolness of a sheltered vale,
Lulled by the slumbrous music of the winds
And by a lute-like voice that sang of rest,

I stretched myself upon a velvet slope
Of marish moss, and, sinking down, I heard
The lute-like voice grow fainter, fainter still,
Distant and dream-like, lose itself in space,—
And I awoke upon the dentist's chair.

Cetacean William

SIR WILLIAM stood beside a whale,
And scanned its greasy hide,
And watched while Mr Simpson plunged
A scalpel in its side.

The knight, he smiled, and clasped his hands
Beneath his broad coat-tails—
“All men have hobbies, it is said,
And mine,—well, mine is whales.

“The whale is very interesting,
Without dubiety,
And makes a first-rate paper for
The Royal Society.

“And when its bones have been exposed,
In process of dissection,
We ’ll macerate and mount them for
My world-renowned collection.”

The Song of "The Second"

WITH forehead swathed in a bandage,
With eyes as heavy as lead,
I sit at work in my dreary "digs"
When I ought to be in my bed.
Grind, grind, grind!
And I turn the leaves with a sigh,
For the session has almost come to an end,
And "The Second" is drawing nigh.

Work, work, work,
Through the dismal winter day,
And grind, grind, grind
At my Cunningham, Ellis and Gray,
As I try to follow out
The vessels and nerves of my part,
Till, muddled, I dream that the crural ring
Is a functionless valve in the heart.

Grind, grind, grind,
When the too-brief day is dead,
Till my epigastric region fills
With an awful sinking dread,

62 THE SONG OF "THE SECOND"

And my red corpuscles pale,
And a dark speck dims my sight,
But I rub my eyes and comfort myself,—
"It is only a leucocyte."

O Fraser and Rutherford !
Be merciful once, I pray,
For I'm lost in a terrible wilderness
Of rhubarb and scammony :
And my doses get worse and worse
The more that I try to cram,
Till I give magnesiæ sulph. by the grain,
And strychnine is safe by the drachm.

Castor and Croton Oil,
Cannabis Indica,
Hales and Brunner and Lieberkühn,
Jalap, Myristica ;
Bowman and Flögel's Line,
Stratum Malpighii,
Jacobson's Nerve and Cholesterin,
Tensores Tympani.

Sometimes my head drops down
 Asleep on my wasted hands,
 But only to dream of the drugs that come
 From Brunton and other *lands* :
 Dream, dream, dream
 Of physiological fact,
 Till I ride the cardiac cycle round
 The cross pyramidal tract.

Cram, cram, cram,
 Till my brain is ready to burst ;
 Ah, surely, of all man's possible ills
 "The Second" is far the worst !
 For the Caudate Nucleus
 Is a twist in the devil's tail,
 And every other word on the page
 Whispers,—“ You're going to fail.

Ruta graveolens,
 Plasma, and lymph, and chyle,
 Hydrochloride of hæmatin,
 And the sodium salts of bile ;

64 THE SONG OF "THE SECOND"

Ancient anatomy tips,
 " Bodfi " and " Parish Priest,"
Wantonly dance in my cerebral cells,
 " Specimen," " Salasap," " Beast."

Work, work, work,
 I've only a fortnight more :
Work, though I half expect
 I'll be spun, as I was before :
For I cannot remember a fact
 Of the thousand and one I have read,
So I'll hopelessly put my lectures away,
 And I'll go to my slumberless bed.



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